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ABSTRACT

This study examined how tracking, among a number of other background and school experience variables, affects students' predisposition to pursue a college education. It hypothesized that background characteristics and experiences affect secondary school track placement, that tracking significantly impacts students' postsecondary plans, and that background characteristics and school experiences influence student decisions to attend two- or four-year institutions. The study explored research on college choice and educational stratification, including tracking, and utilized data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 which is examining critical transitions students experience as they leave elementary school, progress through high school, and enter postsecondary institutions or the workforce. The study used a split group analysis technique to study such variables as socioeconomic status, student's gender, student's race/ethnicity, parents' desire for their child to attend college, and the student's self-report of his or her ability level. The study revealed a number of important relationships among students' background characteristics (especially gender and ethnic group) and track placement and their decisions about whether and where to attend a postsecondary institution. Implications for improving educational access to minority group students are drawn. (Contains 51 references.) (CK)

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INSIDER INFORMATION: SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

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INSIDER INFORMATION: SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The decision of students to continue their education at the postsecondary level is influenced by a number of factors, including student ability, parental educational levels, expectations and encouragement, encouragement from high school teachers and counselors, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender (Hossler and Stage, 1992). And while college access has been enhanced by a number of recent demographic, socioeconomic, and legislative initiatives, class differences in access remain a concern (Hearn, 1991; Falsey and Heyns, 1984). Hearn (1991) and Falsey and Heyns (1984) observed that higher education has become an increasingly stratified system with certain kinds of students not only being predisposed to attend college, but to attend different types of post-secondary institutions.

According to Oakes (1985), one of the most powerful factors determining who goes to college is who has access to a specialized set of knowledge crucial for application and acceptance to college. This knowledge includes what courses to take in high school, how to prepare for and take placement and admissions tests like the SAT and ACT, and how to complete college and financial aid applications. As early as the eighth or ninth grade and throughout high school, tracking or ability grouping by curriculum differentiation singles out certain students who receive this specialized, "insider" knowledge, crucial for college attendance.

Is the purported stratification within the higher education system a continuation and even a result of the practice of tracking high school students? Do, as Falsey and Heyns (1984) suggested, class differences affect who is predisposed to college? In this study we chose to consider how tracking, among a number of other background and school experience variables, affects students' predisposition to pursue college educations.

We hypothesized that:

1) background characteristics and experiences do have an effect on secondary school track placement;
2) among other predictors, tracking has a significant impact on students' postsecondary plans; and
3) among those students who aspire to attend college, background characteristics and school experiences influence the decision to select a two- or four-year institution.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this study, we chose to explore and link two bodies of literature not often examined in relationship to each other. One is the research on **college choice**, which deals with the factors involved in students' decisions to attend college. The other body of literature is the research on educational stratification, including **tracking**, which investigates the criteria by which middle-school and secondary students are placed in different ability groups. This tracking literature also explores the impact that the students' track placements have on their post-secondary aspirations and opportunities. Ironically, tracking literature, which often speculates about the relationship between ability grouping and college attendance, does not go so far as to incorporate the college choice models into such discussions.

College Choice

Various researchers have developed models to explain the stages in students' college decision-making process (Chapman, 1984; Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Kotler, 1976; Litten, 1982). The model developed by Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989), upon which we base our study, divides the college choice process into three stages: predisposition, search, and choice.

The predisposition stage begins as early as elementary school and is shaped by a number of background characteristics and influences. According to Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989), during this predisposition stage "students arrive at a tentative conclusion to continue, or not to continue, their formal education after high school graduation" (p. 27). The search stage of the process encompasses that time during high school when students actively research information about the types of colleges or universities they might attend. They may talk with counselors and others, write away for or receive information, and visit various campuses. As a part of the search phase, students also set their limits, determining what criteria (such as geography and cost) they intend to use in order to make their decisions. In the choice stage, students, based on their research and criteria, select and apply to a small set of institutions and then decide which one to

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attend. A variety of background characteristics and other variables influence the students' ultimate decisions to attend a specific institution.

Working within the Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith (1989) three stage model of college choice, we decided to focus primarily on the variables that are often associated with the first, or **predisposition**, phase. Researchers have identified a number of such variables, including the following ones.

SES

According to Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith's (1989) review of the predisposition literature, family socioeconomic status (SES) seems to influence students' predisposition to attend college. In his two separate studies, Hearn (1984, 1991) indicated that SES, along with other non-academic background characteristics, influences the types of institutions students are predisposed to attend--with non-minority, high SES students more likely to attend prestigious and four-year institutions.

However, not all studies have found an important, direct relationship between SES and students' attendance plans. Jackson (1986), Leslie et al (1977), and Yang (1981), for example, found that SES does not have a major impact on students' post-secondary plans. Many researchers have also determined that the impact of SES on students' predisposition to attend a postsecondary institution is moderated by other factors. Tuttle (1981) found, for example, that the effect of SES is indirect, mediated by ability and achievement. Stage and Hossler (1989) found that the impact of SES on predisposition differs by gender. In another study, Bouse and Hossler (1991) claimed that parents' education, one aspect of SES, has only a low impact on White students' predisposition, while parental income, another aspect of SES, is not a significant predictor of White students' predisposition. Stage and Hossler (1989) also found that neither parents' education nor income has a significant influence on predisposition for Black males and that, for Black females, parents' education has only a moderate influence. However, in a study of a heterogeneous sample of high school seniors, Gilmore et al. (1978) found that, as parental income and education increase, the age at which students begin to think about attending college decreases.

Race/Ethnicity

The relationship between race/ethnicity and predisposition is unclear. Some researchers have found that being a member of a minority group has a negative influence on attending a post-secondary educational institution (Hossler, 1991; Hossler and Stage, 1987).

Bouse and Hossler (1991) reported that conversations with their parents about college have insignificant effects on White and Black males' predispositions, a low influence for White females, and a high influence for Black females. Ekstrom (1985) and Tuttle (1981) found that the effects of race are less or nonexistent when SES is controlled for. This lends some support to Hossler and Stage's (1992) speculation that the relationship between race and predisposition may be best explained by the interaction of other background characteristics, such as SES of parents and parents' educational level.

Gender

What we know about how gender affects predisposition is also not very clear. Hossler and Stage (1987) found that women think more about going to a college or university but receive less family support than do males. Judging from these studies, then, gender may have some impact on students' predisposition. Other studies (Ellsworth, 1982; Tuttle, 1981) found, however, that gender has no significant influence on college predisposition. One reason for these contradictory findings may be that college enrollment patterns for women are and have been in a period of transition (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989).

Parental Influence/Encouragement

Parental encouragement is one of the most significant sources of influence on students' intentions to attend, as well as actual attendance at, college (Carpenter & Fleishman, 1987; Hossler & Stage, 1992). According to Murphy (1981), 43% of all students and 50% of all parents say that the idea of attending a post-secondary educational institution was first initiated by parents. In addition, "the longer post-secondary education has been taken for granted in the home, the more likely the students are to enter college" (Daily, 1981, p. 261).

Researchers have also found that, the greater the fathers' occupational prestige (Carpenter & Fleishman, 1987) and the higher the parental levels of education (Hossler & Stage, 1992), the

more likely parents are to encourage their children to pursue college studies. Finally, according to Conklin and Daily (1981), as the level of parental expectations increases, students are more likely to attend four-year and more selective schools.

Support from Teachers and Others

Researchers generally agree that teachers and counselors have only a slight impact on students' decisions to attend college. Ekstrom (1985), Lewis and Morrison (1975), and Tillery (1973), for example, reported that encouragement from teachers and high school counselors has little effect upon the post-secondary plans of students. On the other hand, in a 1984 study, Falsey and Heyns discovered that students at private schools were more likely to attend college than were their public school peers. They speculated that this difference may be partially explained by the "organizational context" of private schools, in particular the presence of counselors and a stronger college-bound ethic.

Ability/Achievement

In their review of relevant literature, Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) indicated "that student ability and student achievement have a significant and direct impact upon the predisposition of high school students toward a postsecondary education" (p. 30). Manski and Wise (1983) reported that high school GPA and SAT scores are strong predictors of who applies to college. Their findings were corroborated by Peters (1977), Jackson (1978), and Tillery (1973). More recently, however, Hossler and Stage (1992) found that high school GPA has a somewhat modest impact upon students' aspirations for college. Similarly, Bouse and Hossler (1991) found that GPA was a "moderate" predictor of predisposition for White and Black males and females.

Tracking and Educational Stratification

Almost everyone who has attended an American high school knows what tracking is, so widespread and well entrenched is it in our educational system. Researchers, who have long been interested in tracking outcomes, variously define tracking as "curriculum differentiation" (Gamoran, 1987) or "ability grouping ... that is intended to reduce the heterogeneity of instructional

groups" (Slavin, 1990, p. 471). At the junior/middle/high school levels, tracking usually involves three standard tracks--which we label vocational, academic, and rigorous academic. According to Oakes (1992), tracking creates "layers" of different courses "wherein students follow curricular trajectories intended to prepare them for different postsecondary destinations" (p. 12).

Tracking appears to be influenced by several student background characteristics and to have a subsequent effect on the college choice process. Hossler & Stage (1992) reported that SES, ability, and parental encouragement exert a strong influence upon which academic track students are enrolled in during high school. Oakes (1992) reported that placements are influenced by students' race and social class. In fact, throughout the grades, "race, social class and track assignments correlate consistently--with low-income students and non-Asian minorities disproportionately enrolled in low-track classes and advantaged students and whites more often enrolled in the high track.

Previous research indicates that students from different income groups and racial/ethnic groups suffer from stereotypical expectations of school and society. Hallinan (1992) found that students with very low socio-economic status were significantly more likely to be placed in a low track. Useem (1992) reported that students were more likely to be placed in high tracks if their parents were highly educated and thus more likely to involve themselves in and influence their children's track placement. In addition, Kershaw (1992) and Oakes (1992) contended that lower class and minority students are more likely to be placed in lower tracks and more likely to be perceived by teachers to have less academic ability than students from middle and upper class backgrounds.

Braddock (1993), in his study, concluded that African American, Latino, and Native American students are much more likely to be in lower level classes, even when the influences of SES, GPA, and scores on achievement tests are controlled. This leads to their placement in high school non-college-bound programs at a much greater percentage, and as Braddock states, "depress(es) students' educational attainments and aspirations" (p. 335). Oakes and Guiton (1995), in the three schools they studied, found that, because of administrator/teachers' common

conceptions about racial/cultural backgrounds, higher percentages of blacks and Latinos are in the vocational tracks, and Whites and Asian Americans are in the high academic tracks.

It would also appear that tracking affects students' perceptions of themselves and their abilities. Hallinan (1994) reported that students who are placed in low tracks are more likely to view their placement as evidence that teachers have a low opinion of their abilities, their likelihood to be successful in school, and their likelihood to go to college.

Insider Information

Not only does tracking stratify students but, once students are placed in tracks, they receive different types of information. According to Rosenbaum (1980), counselors give college and non-college track students different kinds and amounts of information about tracking and its implications for postsecondary educational plans. Friends and peers also influence students in their various tracks. In fact, Ekstrom (1985) reported that students in general and vocational tracks talk primarily to friends when selecting courses, while academic track students also consult, in addition, parents and counselors. Hallinan offered similar findings (1990). Specifically, students turn to their peers for advice and information. So students' close friends--often those in the same tracks and of the same sex--influence their college expectations and plans.

Oakes (1985), as we have already mentioned, stated that students in high tracks receive specialized knowledge about what courses to take, how to prepare for and take placement and admissions tests, and how to complete the application process. This high-status knowledge is "distributed disproportionately to those from privileged backgrounds" (p. 199). In addition, the teachers in the low tracks are less likely to relate subject matter to other goals; that is, to help students acquire basic concepts and to develop methods of inquiry and problem solving that may help them do well later on in their educational careers.

Litten (1982) also reported that low SES students, who are less likely to have college-educated parents, have fewer contacts with well-educated role models. As a result, these students are likely to have less access to information about postsecondary education. In focus group interviews, Brouder (1987) found that parents of non-academic track students generally were ill-

informed about the costs of college, the kinds of preparation their children needed, and financial aid regulations.

In regard to educational preparation, Klaczynski and Reese (1991) found that students in vocational tracks or trajectories are more likely to be oriented to an "adult preparation" model. Those in an academic trajectory get a "career preparation" orientation: emphasis on intellectualism and achievement plus different teacher expectations and classroom atmospheres. In addition, Rosenbaum (1980) reported that students in general/vocational tracks sometimes underestimate the effects of the tracks they are in. They may stay in low tracks, not knowing the harmful effects of not getting the kinds of information they need to enhance their college prospects. Adding to the seriousness of this misconception is the fact that, the longer students are in a particular track, the more likely they are to stay in that track (Kershaw, 1992).

Two Year/Four Year College Choice

According to Hearn (1984), in the early 1980s, students of lower socioeconomic status, African Americans, and women enrolled in different kinds of schools, even when academic ability, achievement and motivation were controlled for. These students were more likely to attend less selective and less financially-resourced institutions. Ten years later, Hearn (1991) reported that "barriers to attendance appear to be greater in regard to where high school graduates can attend than in regard to whether the graduate can enter the system....Demographic, socioeconomic, and legislative trends have lowered the barriers to access to college to such an extent that virtually any high school graduate can now obtain entry into some part of the postsecondary system. That system is extremely differentiated, however" (p. 158).

One source of differentiation is the level of postsecondary institution a student chooses to attend and its relationship to the student's socio-economic status. Karabel (1977) reported that students with fathers holding blue-collar occupations and from lower-income families tended to attend two-year colleges more frequently than the did either public or private four-year institutions. In his study, Karabel posited that two-year colleges exist as a mechanism by which higher education can maintain a socially stratified system without sacrificing the American principle of equality of opportunity. He argues that all the tiers of higher education may be open to students of

all social backgrounds, but students of lower-income backgrounds are not evenly distributed across all types and levels of postsecondary institutions because they are often steered toward the community college system.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Like Hossler and Stage (1992), we were interested in understanding how personal and family background characteristics and high school experiences influence the postsecondary plans of a group of ninth graders, whom we were subsequently able to follow through to their senior year in high school. And, just as Hearn (1991) was curious about the parallel patterns in college destinations between students in the early 1980s and in the 1970s, we were interested in determining if the factors that influenced the patterns of college aspirations and destinations of high school students who entered college in 1990 were similar to those of their 1980s and 1970s peers.

Analyzing the NELS:88 data set, examining groups by race and by gender, and employing forced entry multiple regression techniques, we considered how a nationally representative sample of young people approached the college choice process. We first asked what factors influence students' high school track placement. We then examined the impact that high school track, other student background characteristics, and the receipt of inside information had on tenth graders' perceptions of their chances of going to college and twelfth graders' application to four- versus two-year institutions.

The college choice literature has not previously attended to the issue of who has access to the specialized "insider" information instrumental in college choice and attendance. Informed by the secondary school literature on tracking, we sought to add the idea of insider information to the college choice literature base by studying both the sources and actual kinds of such information. For this study, we conceptualized some sources of inside information to be the desires of parents, students' discussions with parents about school/college-related issues, and support from teachers and other adults. We also saw students' awareness of the effect of high school track placement on future educational attainment, their knowledge that standardized tests are required for admission to most four year colleges, and their understanding that Advanced Placement (AP) classes and tests

can enhance their competitiveness as future college applicants as other kinds of inside information. Our findings should indicate unique patterns of college predisposition and choice by gender and race/ethnicity; and access to inside information should be significant in shaping these patterns.

METHODS

Sample

This report utilizes the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), which was designed to provide trend data about the critical transitions students experience as they leave elementary school, progress through high school, and enter postsecondary institutions or the workforce. Developed by the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education, the NELS:88 dataset consists of a nationally representative stratified 8th grade base year sample of 24,599 student representing 1,052 schools. On average, each school was represented by 23 student participants. Data collection began in 1988 with an eighth grade cohort and was executed in three waves: base year (1988), first follow-up in the sophomore year (1990), and second follow-up in the senior year (1992). The third follow-up, due to be released in 1996, surveys the students in their second year of college or work (1994). For each released survey wave, NCES obtained greater than a 90% return rate. While students are considered the primary respondents in NELS:88, students' parents, teachers, and school administrators were surveyed in the base year and second follow-up. The longitudinal dataset includes over 6,000 variables describing students' family backgrounds, school experiences, and postsecondary aspirations and plans.

Our data analysis was run in split-group format, first by gender and then by racial/ethnic groups. First, the data was weighted by the longitudinal panel weight provided by NCES and then redistributed to reflect the original sample size, adjusted for non-response bias. This study can be divided into three related analyses: 1) the relationship of student background characteristics to track placement; 2) the influence of various factors upon students' perceptions of their chances to attend college; and 3) the effect of various factors upon students' eventual application to a four-year postsecondary institution. Each sample for the three analyses was different, varying by the

number of missing cases that impacted listwise deletion in our regression analyses. Table 1 shows the numbers and percentages of respondents in each grouping.

--Place Table 1 about here--

Variables

When examining the influences of sociodemographic characteristics on high school track placement, we selected family socioeconomic status (SES), student's gender, student's race/ethnicity, parents' desire for their child to attend college, and the student's self-report of his or her ability level. Because Hearn (1984) advocated including a broad range of ascriptive factors in evaluating the role of family socioeconomic status, the SES variable we constructed for this analysis is a composite variable that combines parents' educational attainment, annual family income, and family size.

Following Oakes' (1992) findings that non-Asian minorities are disproportionately enrolled in low track academic classes, we separated the racial/ethnic groups into dichotomous variables (with Native American students as the referent group) so that we could examine the possibility that students, based on their racial/ethnic group, were placed in different high school tracks. Finally, we included parents' desires for a college education for their child and the student's ability level because these two variables have traditionally been found to be significant influences upon educational achievement. In the absence of any measure of achievement in eighth grade other than students' self-reports of their grades, we chose to create a composite variable that combines students' best estimates of their abilities in English, mathematics, social science, and science.

In studying influences upon tenth graders' perceptions of their chances of going to college, we again included the five background characteristic variables of SES, gender, race/ethnicity, parental desire, and ability level. Conklin & Dailey (1981) discussed how parental encouragement is a long-standing attitude which may directly and indirectly support students' thinking about college. Therefore, to monitor the effect of parental encouragement on the student over time, we chose to use parents' postsecondary educational wishes for their children when they were in eighth

grade as our parental desire measure. In predicting likelihood to attend college, we divided high school track placement into three tracks: vocational, academic, and rigorous academic programs.

The remaining measure in our analysis of influences upon students' perceptions of their chances of going to college included four variables related to sources of "inside information." The scale "discussion with parents" consists of the following items: discussing high school course selection, taking the SAT or ACT, and making college plans when the student was in tenth grade. Although previous research is divided on the effects of teacher and other non-parent adult support on students' postsecondary aspirations and plans, we posited that teacher and other adult support for postsecondary efforts will significantly influence students beyond the effects that can be attributed to their track placement. Thus, we constructed a scale measure composed of support from tenth grade students' teachers, counselors, coaches, and relatives. The final two variables we selected pertain to specific academic endeavors that are beneficial to those planning to attend college: plans to take the SAT or ACT and plans to enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) classes.

The final outcome we examined was a student's decision to apply to a four-year college over a two-year college. We utilized the same independent variables as the previous inquiry, with two exceptions: first, instead of employing variables that measure students' plans to take the SAT or ACT and/or AP classes, we used measures obtained from the second follow-up (students' senior year of high school) that confirm whether or not the student actually took the SAT, ACT, and/or AP classes; second, we constructed a scale that consists of school support for college application endeavors in the twelfth grade, such as help in filling out financial aid forms and assistance with application essays. For a complete list of all the variables utilized in this study, their means and standard deviations, and descriptions, see Table 2.

--Place Table 2 about here--

Analysis

Using SPSS, we ran descriptive statistics on selected variables from the NELS:88 dataset and recoded all non-quantifiable responses to system missing values. In order to facilitate data

reduction, we ran principal axis factor analyses using the oblique rotation method. All scales constructed for this study contain alpha reliabilities greater than .66 (see Table 3).

--Place Table 3 about here--

We also ran Pearson product-moment correlations on all the selected variables in order to examine instances of high inter-correlation among the measures (See Table 4). All of the variables were only mildly correlated at best, with no non-related dichotomized measures recording a correlation higher than (.4).

--Place Table 4 about here--

In order to evaluate the predictive quality of selected measures on three outcomes: 1) high school track placement, 2) students' perceptions of their chances to attend college; and 3) students' decision to apply to a four-year college over a two-year institution, we used the forced entry method in SPSS for ordinary least-squares regression. For outcomes 2 and 3, the thematic blocks we employed in the forced entry method were (in the following order): student background characteristics, track placement, support for college aspirations or plans, and taking steps toward college attendance through participation in events like taking the SAT/ACT or AP classes. Although the proper regression analysis for dichotomous dependent variables is most likely logistic regression, Dey & Astin (1993) have concluded that there is little practical difference between logistic and probit analysis and regular linear regression, as long as the dichotomous dependent variable is moderately distributed, or less than 75 percent in either value. Therefore, we ran least-squares regression techniques for all three analyses, including the dichotomous dependent variable--likelihood to attend a four-year college over a two-year institution.

RESULTS

High School Track Placement

Our first statistical analysis examines the effects of student background characteristics (socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, parental desire, and self-report of ability) on track

placement for all students, male students, female students, White/Caucasian students, Black/African American students, and Asian Pacific American students (see Table 5). Our model of predictors of high school track placement explains between 10 percent and 15 percent of the variance of our composite groups. Parental desire and self-report of ability have a significant influence on high school track placement for all of the composite groups with the exception of the influence of parental desire on the track placement of Black/African American students. Somewhat surprising is the finding that race/ethnicity does not have a significant effect on track placement. In addition, the regression analysis for Hispanic/Latino students is not significant. This appears to indicate the limited predictive power of the background characteristics selected for this model for track placement of Hispanic/Latino students.

--Place Table 5 about here--

Males

For male students in this sample, socio-economic status, parental desire (β=.15, $p \leq .001$), and self-report of ability (β=.20, $p \leq .001$) have a significant, positive effect on high school track placement. These background characteristics explain 10 percent of the variance of high school track placement of this subgroup. Socio-economic status is a significant predictor of track placement only for male and white/Caucasian students in this analysis.

Females

When female students are considered as a composite group, parental desire (β=.13, $p \leq .001$) and self-report of ability (β=.20, $p \leq .001$) have a significant, positive effect on high school track placement. These background characteristics explain 8 percent of the variance of high school track placement of this subgroup. As is the case with African American students and Asian Pacific students, only two background characteristics have a significant influence on track placement for females.

White/Caucasians

In regard to the White/Caucasian students in this sample, socio-economic status, being female, parental desire (β= 15, $p \leq .001$) and self-report of ability (β=.19, $p \leq .001$) have a significant, positive effect on high school track placement. These background characteristics explain 9 percent of the variance of high school track placement of this subgroup.

Black/African Americans

When considering the Black/African American students in this sample, being female (β= 21, $p \leq .001$) and self-report of ability (β= 22, $p \leq .001$) have a significant ($p \leq .001$), positive effect on high school track placement. Black/African American students are the only subgroup of the sample in which parental desire is not significant. These background characteristics explain 15 percent of the variance of high school track placement of this subgroup. It is interesting that only two background characteristics have a significant influence on track placement for Black/African American students yet, in comparison to the other subgroups included in this analysis, a relatively high amount of variance is explained.

Asian Pacific Americans

With Asian Pacific American students as a composite group in this sample, parental desire (β= .25, $p \leq .01$) and self-report of ability (β= .18, $p \leq .05$) have a significant, positive effect on high school track placement. These background characteristics explain 12 percent of the variance of high school track placement of this subgroup. As with Black/African American students, it is interesting to find that only two background characteristics have a significant effect on track placement for Asian Pacific American students and a relatively high amount of variance is explained.

10th Graders' Perceptions of Their Chances of Going to College

Our model of predictors of the college predisposition of tenth graders explains between 31 and 45 percent of the variance for our composite groups. Table 6 presents all significant relationships among our variables for males, females, White, Black, Hispanic/Latino and Asian Pacific Americans.

--Place Table 6 about here--

Males

SES, self reported ability, discussions with and desires of parents, teacher support, and plans to take ACT/SAT are all statistically significant ($p \leq .001$) positive predictors of male's predisposition to college in the tenth grade. Interestingly, placement in any of the three high school tracks -- academic, rigorous, and vocational -- is also positively related to young men's favorable responses to whether they are going to college. Our model of factors affecting predisposition to college explains 31 percent of the variance.

Females

When females are considered as a composite group, our model again explains 31 percent of the variance. Similar to male students, females' SES, self reported ability, discussions with and desires of parents, teacher support, plans to take ACT/SAT are all statistically significant positive. Yet, tenth grade Black/ African American females (β=-.11, $p \leq .01$) and Latinas (β=-.11, $p \leq .01$) are significantly less likely to rate their chances of going to college as probable. And while being in the academic or rigorous high school track positively predicts college aspirations, those young women who are placed in vocational tracks are significantly less predisposed to college in the tenth grade (β=-.04, $p \leq .01$)

White/Caucasians

With Whites as a composite group, the only statistically negative predictor of tenth graders' chances of going to college is being in the vocational track β=-.08, $p \leq .001$). SES, being female,

parental desires and discussion, academic and rigorous tracks, teacher support and plans to take ACT/SAT are all positively related ($p \leq .001$) to students' rating their chances of pursuing postsecondary education as highly probable. As in the prior models, 31 percent of our model's variance is explained by the independent background and school experience variables we have included.

Black/African Americans

Parental postsecondary desires ($\beta = .28$, $p \leq .001$) and discussions ($\beta = .23$, $p \leq .001$) with their children are strong predictors of African American students' plans to pursue a college education. And for Blacks, like their White peers, SES, being female, and support of their teachers are important factors forecasting their plans following high school. Track placement has no effect on this population's college-going tendencies. The R^2 is .38, suggesting our model of variables is a slightly better predictor of predisposition for this population than for the previous sub-groups.

Hispanic/Latinos

Hispanic/Latino students' discussions of school-related issues with parents in the tenth grade is the most powerful predictor of college predisposition in our model ($\beta = .36$, $p \leq .001$). Strangely, eighth grade parental desires is not a significant factor. Being female, from a higher SES, in the academic or rigorous tracks, and having plans to take SAT/ACT all have positive effects on this group's perceptions of their chances of going to college in the tenth grade. Our model explains 41 percent of the variance for this segment of our sample.

Asian Pacific Americans

For Asian American and Pacific Islanders, parental desire when the student is in the eighth grade ($\beta = .25$, $p \leq .001$) and self reported ability ($\beta = .18$, $p \leq .01$) are strong positive influences on tenth grade students' perception of their chances of going to college. Yet discussions with parents in the tenth grade is not significant. Unlike each of the other composite groups, the lower the

student's SES (ß=-.14, p≤.05) the more predisposed the student is to college. Plans to take the SAT/ACT and AP tests are positively linked with college predisposition. In this case, our model and, in particular, five of the eleven background and school experience variables explain 45 percent of the variance.

12th Graders' Application to a Four-year Postsecondary Institution

Our model of one aspect of college choice, application to a four-year postsecondary institution over a two-year college, explains a differing percent of overall variance depending upon the subgroup being examined. See Table 7 for predictors of application to a four-year college for males, females, White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American students.

--Place Table 7 about here--

Males

All hypothesized positive predictors of choice in the application to a four-year school (SES, parental desire, self-reported ability, academic track placement, discussions with parents, school support with applications, and took SAT/ACT or AP classes) are statistically significant at the $p \leq .01$ level. Other than college preparatory actions like taking the SAT or AP classes, for males in our study parental desires for their children's postsecondary education ($\beta=.11$, $p \leq .001$) and males' self-reports of their ability ($\beta=.12$, $p \leq .001$) are the strongest influences upon their decisions to apply to a four-year colleges. Racial/ethnic group and support from teachers/others seems to make no significant contribution toward males' propensity toward a four-year college. Interestingly, the track a male is placed in does not seem to influence his decision to apply to college: males in all three tracks (vocational, academic, and rigorous academic) are positively predicted to apply to a four-year institution. Our model for males explains 24 percent of the variance.

Females

Like their male counterparts, females' SES, parental desire, self-reported ability, academic track placement, discussions with parents, school support with applications, and taking the SAT/ACT or AP classes positively influence their eventual application to a four-year college. Similarly, race/ethnicity prove to be of little predictive value for females. However, it seems that track placement does play a role in influencing which females will apply to a four-year college. While being in a rigorous academic track positively affects a female's disposition toward a four-year college (β= .08, $p \leq .001$), being in a vocational track negatively influences such a disposition (β=-.12, $p \leq .001$), and placement in the regular academic track is not statistically significant.

White/Caucasians

For White students, all of the independent variables serve as positive predictors of who will apply to a four-year college, including vocational and regular academic tracks. The strongest influences stem from SES (β= .11, $p \leq .001$), parental desires for their children's postsecondary education (β= .10, $p \leq .001$), self-reported ability (β= .10, $p \leq .001$), discussions with parents (β= .10, $p \leq .001$), and taking the SAT/ACT (β= .20, $p \leq .001$) or AP classes (β=.10, $p \leq .001$). Our model explains 26 percent of the variance in predicting White students' application to four-year colleges.

Black/African Americans

The R^2 to predict Black students' decisions to apply to four-year colleges is 39 percent, which would suggest that this model has a stronger fit with the African American student sample than with the other racial/ethnic groups. Among the predictors of application to a four-year college, the strongest positive indicators are self-report of ability (β=.20, $p \leq .001$), took the SAT/ACT (β= .17, $p \leq .001$), and took AP classes (β=.24, $p \leq .001$). Strong negative influences include being in the vocational track (β=-.23, $p \leq .001$) and receiving support from teachers/others (β=-.22, $p \leq .001$). This finding implies that African American students are being encouraged by their teachers and other adult influences to apply to two-year colleges over four-year institutions.

Hispanic/Latinos

In contrast with the African American composite group, the percent of variance explained for Latinos is much lower (17 percent). Our analysis concludes that Latinas are more likely to apply to four-year colleges than are Hispanic males (β=.14, $p \leq .01$), and the strongest positive predictor of application to four-year colleges is taking the SAT or ACT (β=.25, $p \leq .001$).

Asian Pacific Americans

Although a considerable amount of the variance (37 percent) is explained for predictors of Asian American students' decisions to apply to four-year colleges, only a relatively small number of independent variables comprise the R^2. Taking the SAT or ACT (β=.23, $p \leq .01$) and being of a high SES (β=.19, $p \leq .01$) are positive influences on application to four-year colleges. Track placement seems to play a role in Asian Americans' college choice outcomes, since being in the rigorous academic track is a positive predictor of application to four-year colleges (β=.22, $p \leq .05$), but being in the vocational track is a strong negative influence upon such a choice (β=-.26, $p \leq .001$).

DISCUSSION

We approached this research believing that access to key "inside information" was influential in shaping both students' predisposition to college and their ultimate decision to enter the system at either the two or four-year level. This specialized information includes knowing that a student is considerably more likely to attend college if she is enrolled in an academic track in high school; being aware that taking standardized admissions tests (ACT/SAT) is required for entry at almost all four-year institutions; and knowing that taking Advanced Placement classes and tests is an important demonstration of student ability in the more competitive college admissions processes. Research and professional experience tells us that parents and teachers are the primary purveyors of these kinds of information. Our analysis by split groups facilitated insight into unique patterns of college predisposition and choice by gender and race/ethnicity.

Gender

Higher SES makes a difference in track placement only for males, but higher SES positively influences both genders' predispositions to attend college and their decisions to attend four-year institutions. Race/ethnicity has no effect on either males' or females' placement in tracks or on eventual college choice. However, we did find a negative relationship between being an African American female or Latina and having strong aspirations for attending college. For both males and females, parents' desire for their children to attend college has a strong positive influence on track placement, college predisposition, and application to four-year institutions.

While the self-report of ability is the strongest predictor of track placement for both males and females, its influence on predisposition and college choice is not as strong as other variables in the study. Males and females in the two higher tracks show stronger predispositions to attend college and to apply to four-year institutions. One exception, however, is males in the vocational track, who indicate high college aspirations and who are more likely to apply to four-year than to two-year institutions. This anomaly warrants further investigation.

In terms of insider information, discussing their college plans with their parents is a positive predictor of males' and females' predisposition and choice. In the predisposition phase, support from teachers is a strong positive influence for both genders. However, that support is insignificant in the college choice phase. Perhaps teachers' influence on students takes place primarily early in the students' high school careers, when they are deciding whether or not to attend college. Later, when the students are in the college search and choice process, they rely more on parental and peer influence as well as their own personal preferences. Finally, given that both genders plan to take ACT/SAT in the tenth grade, actually take ACT/SAT by the twelfth grade, and also take some AP classes, we can infer that they are receiving some kinds of insider information.

White/Caucasians

The results for the White students are consistent with the literature. SES, parental desire, and self-reported ability influence higher track placement, stronger aspirations for college, and

likelihood to apply to four-year institutions. In addition, higher track placement positively predicts predisposition and choice--with one notable exception: Whites in the vocational track are more likely to apply to four-year than to two-year institutions. The data also suggest that White students take advantage of all the various types of insider information included in our study except for planning to take AP tests in the tenth grade.

African Americans

College predisposition for African American students is positively affected by supportive and encouraging relationships with parents and teachers. And yet parents have no significant influence on the high school track assignments of their students. While African American parents know it is important to encourage their children to aspire to college, they might not know how important it is to be actively involved in the school lives of their children, advocating for placement in an "academic" track. And while there were statistically significant links between all other composite groups' predisposition to attend college in the tenth grade and their plans to take ACT/SAT, for African American students there is no significant link. Again, while they may be demonstrating interest in pursuing postsecondary education, African American students may not know how exactly to achieve this end.

While teachers positively influence tenth grade African Americans' predisposition to college, in the twelfth grade they play a significant role encouraging African American students to attend two-year versus four-year institutions. Teachers may be playing a deliberate or unconscious role in supporting a stratification of access to higher education for this population of students.

Hispanic/Latinos

Hispanic/Latinos are, according to our findings, applying to two- and four-year institutions. As indicated by the low percentage of explained variance (.17), however, the variables we used to predict college choice are not helpful. The only two variables that influence both predisposition and choice for Hispanic/Latino students are being female and taking and/or took ACT/SAT. In the predisposition stage, discussing college plans with parents is a strong

positive predictor of the students' perceptions of their chances of going to college. SES and higher track placement are also positive significant predictors in the predisposition phase.

Asian Pacific Americans

Parents of Asian American/Pacific Islander students have more influence than even students' self reported ability in the high school track placements of their children. Parents' desires are the strongest predictor of a student being assigned to an academic or rigorously academic curricular track in high school. Asian American/Pacific Islander students are the only sub-group who demonstrate positive links between their predisposition to attend college in the tenth grade and having plans to take both the ACT/SAT and AP tests. This population seems to have access to the requisite information for how to get into college.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Our study reveals a number of important implications about the relationships among students' background characteristics and track placement and their decisions about whether and where to attend a postsecondary institution. We are, on the other hand, left with a few issues that need resolving.

First of all, our analyses of track placement do not account for a high percentage of the variance for any of our split groups, especially for Hispanic/Latino students. It appears that research is needed to determine more effective variables for predicting the nature of track placement. The very small predictive values we obtained for Hispanic/Latino students for the college choice phase generally suggests the need for more research into Hispanic/Latino students.

We realize that our analyses were based on relatively low numbers for some of the minority groups--especially Hispanic/Latinos and Asian Americans. Such low numbers of subjects could contribute to the low percentage of variance explained and the low predictive values of some of the variables. In addition, given the low Ns, the responses from the students in those minority groups may be subject to non-response bias.

Inasmuch as the NELS:88 data set did not include an objective measure of students' ability in 8th grade, we relied upon the students' self-reports of their abilities for our students' achievement variable. Such a measure may be biased, since the students' self-reports may not accurately reflect their actual achievements or abilities.

Another shortcoming of the NELS:88 dataset is that it does not yet include the 1994, third follow-up data. Had that data been released at the time of our study, we could have followed our students and examined their actual college matriculation. Obviously future research on this topic with the NELS:88 data should study the students once they have graduated and gone on to college.

Finally, this study, as well as many others on the subject, begins at the eighth grade level. Researchers would do well to look at the earlier years in students' academic careers and to investigate how and where the background variables begin to influence educational stratification.

POLICY AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our research joins a body of work which for over twenty-five years has demonstrated that differences in students' predisposition toward and access to higher education exist and that they are based on gender, SES, race/ethnicity, and high school tracking. What then can be done to address this recurring stratification of educational aspirations and achievements? Hossler and Stage (1992) note that financial aid programs have been among the most frequently-cited interventions targeted to broaden access. They astutely acknowledge, however, that financial aid is typically an issue which students and parents do not confront until late in the students' high school careers and typically after students have already decided to pursue college educations. Our study, along with others, indicates that students are making their decisions about whether or not they will be attending college at least as early as tenth grade. In order to influence both students' aspirations and parental encouragement of students' educational aspirations, interventions intending to impact students and parents must come at an earlier juncture. The earlier families and students are taking for granted that they will be pursuing college degrees and the more informed they are of the specialized knowledge necessary for that pursuit, perhaps the better prepared families will be for gaining access to higher education.

Programmatic Responses to Educational Access

Levine and Nidiffer (1996) identify Upward Bound and the I Had a Dream (IHAD) Program as interventions designed expressly to broaden access to higher education. Title IV of the 1965 Higher Education Act funded a specific set of programs, including Upward Bound and Talent Search, to assist low-income Americans in entering and successfully navigating college. Upward Bound is designed to assist first-generation college-going students from families with incomes under $24,000 in their development of academic skills. The program provides subject matter instruction to students on college campuses after school and in the summer. In 1995, 578 programs were in operation.

Talent Search is designed to serve sixth through twelfth graders by providing counseling sessions on college admissions requirements, scholarship and financial aid programs, and precollege test preparation. This program is specifically targeted to help families better understand the full range of educational opportunities and options (NCEOA, 1995). Clearly these federal programs recognize students' needs for both academic support and access to specialized knowledge of what is necessary for college admittance (e.g. test preparation, filling out financial aid forms).

In 1981, Eugene Lang gave a graduation speech to the sixth graders of P.S. 121 in East Harlem. Veering from his original text, he promised college tuition to each student who graduated from high school. That promise has since grown into 140 I Had a Dream (IHAD) programs spanning more than forty cities. Noting again that it takes more than mere tuition money to enhance predisposition to college, the program has subsequently evolved into a full-time operation. Each program is expected to operate with a paid coordinator who works daily with a class of students, parents, and teachers, nurturing their development via tutoring, one-on-one mentoring, and cultural support activities.

Arizona State University's Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program is an inter-generational program designed to increase the understanding, preparation and motivation, (i.e., the predisposition) of Hispanic women, one of the most underrepresented groups in higher education.

This program recognizes the influence of girls' mothers on their educational aspirations and directly engages both mothers and daughters in the educational process. As a result of ASU's program, "the mothers will be better informed of their own potential and be better able to assist their daughters to make those decisions which will maximize their future career and academic opportunities. A support network of school counselors, community leaders, and professional role models help participants to realize the benefits of higher education" (Arizona State University). Starting in the eighth grade, mother-daughter pairs spend 80-100 hours on campus during a four month period, becoming familiar with staff, faculty and students; and participating in goal setting, academic major and career exploration exercises. The experience culminates in a weekend stay by mothers and daughters in the residence halls. Once in high school, the girls continue to return to campus to participate in writing and communication workshops. Many of the girls work with college student mentors, who help them find scholarships and fill out financial aid and college admission forms.

Recognizing the positive force parental involvement can be in the academic success of children, on February 12, 1996, Joe Dulin, principal of the Roberto Clemente alternative school in Ann Arbor, Michigan, challenged African American parents nationwide to unite for National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID). Following his participation in the Million Man March, Dulin conceived of NAAPID as a means of promoting a higher standard of education for African American youngsters by actively engaging parents in their students' school lives. The primary objectives of NAAPID are to:

> create a dialogue between home, school and community; provide a conducive learning environment where children and parents can feel comfortable with educators and vice versa, and; assist educators, superintendents and other officials in being receptive to parental input and support" (from NAAPID Informational Packet)

To help achieve these ends, NAAPID has created a reference guide for parents, illustrating how parents can engage in conferences with both their students and their students' teachers. The guide gives examples of what parents can do, the kinds of questions they can ask students and teachers, and how they can get involved in their school community. Though presented as a single day for parents' involvement in their children's schools, the idea is considerably broader: actively engage

African American parents and guardians in the day-to-day school lives of their children. An institute to further explore how students, teachers, parents, and community members can work together in meeting the educational needs of African American children is scheduled for August 14-16, 1996, in Ann Arbor.

NAAPID, Upward Bound, the IHAD Program, and the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program are all models of what can work in awakening and supporting students' predisposition to college attendance. These programs share elements of community and parental encouragement of young people, academic and social skill building, and access to inside information regarding what one needs to know and do to get into college. Levine and Nidiffer (1996) conclude their book on how the poor get to college by acknowledging that "for more than 350 years, our country has experimented with a plethora of approaches to making college a reality for poor people. During the past half century, based on these experiments, the United States has lurched toward a national policy for achieving this end" (p. 178). Three decades of research on student predisposition to higher education suggests that a piecemeal "lurching" effort has not resulted in a full opening of the door to education to all segments of our population. Insider information regarding how one gets to college needs to change into "all-comer" information, accessible to any and all, and deliberately shared with those who traditionally have been outsiders.

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Table 1
Numbers of cases in split-group format per analysis type

Group	N	%
Student background characteristics on track placement		
Total	3,353	100%
Male	1,805	54%
Female	1,547	46%
White/Caucasian	2,728	79%
Black/African American	250	7%
Hispanic/Latino	214	6%
Asian/Pacific American	215	6%
Various factors upon students' perceptions of their chances to attend college		
Total	4,585	100%
Male	2,357	51%
Female	2,228	49%
White/Caucasian	3,625	79%
Black/African American	402	9%
Hispanic/Latino	342	7%
Asian/Pacific American	155	3%
Various factors upon students' eventual application to a 4-year postsecondary institution		
Total	4,385	100%
Male	2,251	51%
Female	2,134	49%
White/Caucasian	3,497	80%
Black/African American	360	8%
Hispanic/Latino	323	7%
Asian/Pacific American	148	3%

Table 2
Means and standard deviations for variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
Student background characteristics			
Socioeconomic status	2.82	1.08	coded in quartiles
Parents' highest level of education	3.11	1.29	3=graduated high school, 4=college graduate
Annual family income	9.69	2.69	9=$20,000-24,999, 10=$25,000-34,999
Size of family	4.66	1.47	range=0-5
Gender	1.53	0.50	1=male, 2=female
White/Caucasian	0.79	0.41	1=no, 2=yes
Black/African American	0.09	0.28	1=no, 2=yes
Hispanic/Latino	0.08	0.26	1=no, 2=yes
Asian Pacific American	0.04	0.19	1=no, 2=yes
Parents' postsecondary desires for student (1988)	10.05	1.78	scale of how much school mother + father wants, range=2-12
Ability measures			
Self-reported curricular ability group (1988)	9.54	1.81	scale of 8th grade ability in science, English, social studies, and math
Low ability group	0.04	0.21	1=no, 2=yes
Middle ability group	0.27	0.44	1=no, 2=yes
High ability group	0.28	0.48	1=no, 2=yes
High school track			
High school program (1992)	2.26	0.54	1=voc/tech, 2=academic, 3=rigorous academic
Vocational program	0.03	0.18	1=no, 2=yes
Academic program	0.45	0.50	1=no, 2=yes
Rigorous academic program	0.21	0.41	1=no, 2=yes
Insider information			
Discussions with parents about college/high school (1990)	6.03	1.42	scale of frequency of discussion with parents regarding school courses, going to college, preparation for SAT or ACT (1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often; range=3-9)
Support from teachers/others (1990)	6.36	1.44	scale of postsecondary desires of teacher, counselor, coach or relative (1=other, 2=further education after high school; range=4-8)
Support with applications (1992)	5.65	1.36	scale of support student received with school and financial aid applications, application essays, and days off for campus visits (1=no, 2=yes; range=4-8)
Plans to take SAT (1990)	1.70	0.46	1=no, 2=yes
Took the SAT or ACT (1992)	3.00	0.64	scale of student plans to take ACT/SAT (1=no, 2=yes; range=2-4)
Plans to take AP tests (1990)	1.29	0.45	1=no, 2=yes
Took an AP course (1992)	1.58	0.49	1=no, 2=yes
College choice			
Chances student will go to college (1990)	4.40	0.92	1=very low, 2=low, 3=about 50/50, 4=high, 5=very high
Student has applied to college(s) (1992)	1.29	0.45	1=4-year college, 2=2-year college

Table 3
Orthogonal factor loadings and reliabilities for study

Scale	Loading	Alpha
Parental desire for postsecondary education for child (1988)		.9053
Mother's desire	.9092	
Father's desire	.9092	
Self-reported ability in 4 subjects (1988)		.7923
Science ability	.7501	
English ability	.7281	
Social studies ability	.7102	
Math ability	.6134	
Support from teachers and others (1990)		.7501
Teacher	.8165	
Counselor	.7287	
Coach	.5517	
Relative	.5314	
Discussed college requirement issues with parents (1990)		6654
Discussed high school course selection	.7214	
Discussed taking the ACT/SAT	.6102	
Discussed going to college	.5662	
Support from school with college applications (1992)		.6636
Help with postsecondary school applications	.7110	
Help with financial aid applications	.6418	
Help with application essays	.5641	

Table 4

Correlations of final variables in study

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Family's SES																			
2. Female	-.04 *																		
3. White Caucasian	-.17 *	-.02 *																	
4. Black African American	.08 *	.00	-.60 *																
5. Asian Pacific American	-.11 *	.00	-.37 *	-.06 *															
6. Hispanic Latino	.27 *	.02	-.55 *	-.09 *	-.05 *														
7. Parents' post high school desires for student in 1988	-.05 *	.05 *	-.01	-.01	.07 *	-.01													
8. Low ability group	-.05 *	.05 *	-.01	.02 *	-.01	-.01	-.09 *												
9. Middle ability group	.05 *	.04 *	.00	-.01	-.04 *	.02 *	-.10 *	-.14 *											
10. High ability group	.06 *	.05 *	.00	.01	.02	-.02 *	.13 *	-.14 *	-.36 *										
11. Vocational program	-.11 *	.04 *	.01	.00	-.01	-.01	-.15 *	.07 *	.04 *	-.06 *									
12. Academic program	.05 *	-.03 *	.02 *	-.03 *	.03 *	-.02	.03 *	-.04 *	.02 *	-.01	-.18 *								
13. Rigorous academic program	.08 *	.02	.03 *	-.02 *	.04 *	-.03 *	.13 *	-.09 *	-.06 *	.10 *	-.10 *	-.45 *							
14. Discussion of h.s. college choices with parents in 1990	.14 *	.06 *	-.03 *	.05 *	.02 *	-.03 *	.21 *	-.07 *	-.01	.13 *	-.10 *	.06 *	.12 *						
15. Others' post high school desires for student in 1990	.14 *	-.05 *	-.04 *	.04 *	.02	.01	.23 *	-.03 *	-.04 *	.13 *	-.11 *	.07 *	.10 *	.26 *					
16. Support with applications	.00	.08 *	-.05 *	.06 *	.00	.00	.07 *	-.05 *	-.06 *	.08 *	-.05 *	.01	.09 *	.16 *	.17 *				
17. Student took SAT or ACT	.20 *	.05 *	.00	-.01	.05 *	-.02	.24 *	-.12 *	-.08 *	.12 *	-.15 *	.08 *	.20 *	.20 *	.18 *	.18 *			
18. Student took AP class(es)	.16 *	-.01	.00	-.02	.05 *	.00	.22 *	-.14 *	-.16 *	.24 *	-.12 *	.04 *	.20 *	.19 *	.16 *	.14 *	.26 *		
19. Student's described chances of attending college (1990)	.24 *	-.01	.01	-.01	.05 *	-.03 *	.31 *	-.13 *	-.12 *	.17 *	-.19 *	.07 *	.23 *	.21 *	.22 *	.17 *	.40 *	.31 *	
20. Student has applied to colleges (1992)	.27 *	.06 *	.04 *	-.03 *	.08 *	-.07 *	.27 *	-.12 *	-.10 *	.14 *	-.14 *	.03 *	.21 *	.23 *	.22 *	.31 *	.37 *	.29 *	.48 *

* $p < .05$

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Table 5
Summary statistics of multiple regression analysis for student background characteristics on high school track placement

	High school track placement					
	All students (n=3,353)	Males (n=1,805)	Females (n=1,547)	White/ Caucasian (n=2,728)	Black/ African American (n=250)	Asian Pacific American (n=125)
	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig
Socio-economic status	.05 ***	.07 ***	-	.06 ***	-	-
Female	.05 ***	N/A	N/A	.02 *	.21 ***	-
White/Caucasian	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
Black/African American	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian Pacific American	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic/Latino	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
Parental desire	.15 ***	.15 ***	.13 ***	.15 ***	-	.25 **
Self-report of ability	.20 ***	.20 ***	.20 ***	.19 ***	.22 ***	.18 *
R^2	.09	.10	.08	.09	.15	.12

(*) $p \leq .05$, (**) $p \leq .01$, (***) $p \leq .001$, (-) insignificant finding, (N/A) not applicable for this group

Note Hispanic/Latino split-group regression analysis was found to be statistically insignificant (Sig F = .08)

Table 6
Summary statistics of multiple regression analysis for 10th graders' perceptions of their chances of going to college

	10th graders' responses to chances of going to college						
	All students (n=4,585)	Males (n=2,357)	Females (n=2,228)	White/ Caucasian (n=3,625)	Black/ African American (n=402)	Hispanic/ Latino (n=342)	Asian Pacific American (n=155)
	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig
Socio-economic status	.10 ***	.14 ***	.06 **	.10 ***	.19 ***	.11 **	-.14 *
Female	.07 ***	N/A	N/A	.06 ***	.14 **	.08 *	-
White/Caucasian	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Black/African American	-	-	-.11 **	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian Pacific American	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic/Latino	-	-	-.11 **	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Parental desire	.15 ***	.13 ***	.16 ***	.13 ***	.28 ***	-	.25 ***
Self-report of ability	.08 ***	.06 ***	.13 ***	.11 ***	-	-	.18 **
Vocational track	-.08 ***	.11 ***	-.04 *	-.08 ***	-	-	-
Academic track	.06 ***	.05 *	.08 ***	.07 ***	-	.15 **	-
Rigorous academic track	.10 ***	.10 ***	.09 ***	.11 ***	-	.12 **	-
Discussions with parents	.19 ***	.19 ***	.18 ***	.17 ***	.23 ***	.36 ***	-
Support from teachers/others	.15 ***	.15 ***	.15 ***	.16 ***	.16 ***	-	-
Planning to take ACT/SAT	.16 ***	.15 ***	.18 ***	.16 ***	-	.31 ***	.27 ***
Planning to take AP tests	-	-	-	-	-	-	.14 *
R^2	.31	.31	.31	.31	.38	.41	.45

(*) $p \leq .05$, (**) $p \leq .01$, (***) $p \leq .001$, (-) insignificant finding, (N/A) not applicable for this group

Table 7
Summary statistics of multiple regression analysis for application to a 4-year institution

	12th graders' application to a 4-year institution over a 2-year institution						
	All students (n=4,385)	Males (n=2,251)	Females (n=2,134)	White/ Caucasian (n=3,497)	Black/ African American (n=360)	Hispanic/ Latino (n=323)	Asian Pacific American (n=148)
	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig	β Sig
Socio-economic status	.09 ***	.09 ***	.09 ***	.11 ***	-	-	.19 **
Female	-.05 ***	N/A	N/A	.05 ***	-	.14 **	-
White/Caucasian	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Black/African American	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian Pacific American	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic/Latino	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Parental desire	.09 ***	.11 ***	.08 ***	.10 ***	-	-	-
Self-report of ability	.11 ***	.12 ***	.11 ***	.10 ***	.20 ***	-	-
Vocational track	-.10 ***	.08 ***	-.12 ***	.08 ***	-.23 ***	-	-.26 ***
Academic track	.04 **	.06 **	-	.04 *	.13 **	-	-
Rigorous academic track	.09 ***	.10 ***	.08 ***	.09 ***	.13 **	-	.22 *
Discussions with parents	.08 ***	.08 ***	.09 ***	.10 ***	-	-	-
Support from teachers/others	-	-	-	.04 **	-.22 ***	-	-
School support with applications	.06 ***	.07 ***	.07 ***	.06 ***	-	-	-
Took ACT/SAT	.20 ***	.18 ***	.23 ***	.20 ***	.17 ***	.25 ***	.23 **
Took AP classes	.12 ***	.14 ***	.09 ***	.10 ***	.24 ***	-	-
R^2	.24	.24	.25	.26	.39	.17	.37

(*) $p \leq .05$, (**) $p \leq .01$, (***) $p \leq .001$, (-) insignificant finding, (N/A) not applicable for this group